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ASSUMPTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF MANPOWER PROGRAMS FOR OFFENDERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPPORTED WORK

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This paper details the assumptions guiding the National Supported Work Demonstration and describes the distinctions between Supported Work and other manpower and employment programs for ex-offenders. The theoretical linkages between crime, poverty, and unemployment postulated by sociologists and economists are discussed, along with their contributions to intervention policies and programs. A review of manpower programs that have attempted to produce changes in the behavior and lifestyle of ex-offenders through changes in employment opportunities reveals major drawbacks and inconclusive results. These problems provide a basis for the development of several key characteristics of Supported Work, which reflect both policy suggestions and theoretical explanations. While the potential for success of the Supported Work Program is assumed to derive from its contrast to earlier programs, the importance of recognizing the presence of many barriers in any attempt to intervene in the relationship between employment status and crime is stressed.

Assumptions and Achievements of Manpower Programs for Offenders:
Implications for Supported Work

Introduction

The Supported Work Demonstration, established in 1974, is an employment program for people who have traditionally had difficulty getting or holding regular jobs.[1] The participants in the program include women on welfare with dependent children, out of school youth, individuals who have been addicted to drugs, and offenders recently released from prison.

The Supported Work Program has no restrictive assumptions concerning the reasons for the employment problems among its targeted populations. That is, it recognizes that these difficulties may stem from labor market restrictions, employer reluctance and discrimination, or individual lack of motivation. The program does posit, however, that its participants at the time they enroll need more than a job. It assumes that the future successful labor market participation among these people requires a particular entry experience, one in which the hesitations, self-doubts, resentments, and poor work habits of workers are permitted, indeed helped, to ease over time. Job experience under the program is characterized by two features that are presumed to facilitate this process. These are termed "peer support" and "graduated stress." Peer support refers to the practice of placing participants in work settings where they are in the company of others who have similar backgrounds. Graduated stress involves the adapting of participants' work tasks to their

preparedness--perhaps beginning with few demands and increasing these until they are comparable to those of regular work force members.

The potential significance of the program is found not only in preparing individuals for labor force participation but in further consequences. A fundamental hypothesis of Supported Work is that ex-offender participants, because of their increased employability, will become less involved in the illegal activities that led, in the first instance, to their program eligibility.

In the following pages of this paper we examine more closely the assumptions guiding the Supported Work endeavor and attempt to distinguish these assumptions and the program itself from the assumptions and substance of other employment programs for ex-offenders.

In the context of this discussion we also attempt to explain some results that have been obtained from other programs.

Crime and Poverty

The typical member of the ex-offender target group is young, male, single, with a low level of education and recent prison experience. The group as a whole is characterized by histories of multiple convictions and incarcerations; prior employment is commonly limited to short tenure, low-skilled jobs paying low wages. In sum, the ex-offender target group closely approximates the typologies constructed in the criminology literature of the "common criminal," semi-professional offender, or conventional criminal (e.g., Clinard & Quinney, 1973; Gibbons, 1977); that is, a person who works at crime at least on a part-time basis, tends toward relatively low-skilled crimes, is not well paid for his criminal

endeavors, and, through multiple contacts with the criminal justice system, may have come to see himself as a criminal.

Typically, theory has argued for a link between the law-violating behavior of such individuals and either poverty or unemployment. Many studies of this hypothesized link have been carried out using aggregate-level data only, noting that certain time periods or specific urban areas characterized by high unemployment rates also have high rates of certain types of crime. Clearly, conclusions based on these relationships suffer from limitations resulting from an ecological fallacy.[2] Yet findings from studies based on micro-level data have shown that a large percentage of criminals are unemployed at the time they commit crimes, and that recently released ex-offenders with jobs have a lower probability of recidivism than those without jobs (Taggart, 1972; Rovner-Pieczenik, 1973). These studies have been taken to support the view that unemployment is a contributory factor in decisions to participate in extra-legal activities.[3] They also furnish the type of evidence used by governmental commissions that have identified unemployment and poverty as major causes of crime (Joint Commission on Correctional Manpower and Training [1967], President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice [1967], and the President's Task Force on Prisoner Rehabilitation [1970]).

Despite the substantial scholarly and official support for the thesis that unemployment leads to crime, some observers have argued that the thesis is simplistic and misleading. Some call for the need to specify the quality of employment, including skill requirements,

wage levels, and the stability of job tenure, in understanding the relationship between crime and economic well-being (e.g., Evans, 1968: 209; Sullivan, 1968:54; Pownall, 1969; Skoler, 1971; Cook, 1975). Others argue that the term "criminal activity" is itself too ambiguous to provide a basis for theory. Many of these writers note the data indicating that virtually all individuals commit crime (see Porterfield, 1943; Wallerstein and Wyle, 1947; Erickson and Empey, 1963). They also argue that since crime is so varied, the causes must be varied, even though "the common element in all of them is their being considered illegal" (Smith and Berlin, 1974:6). At least one student has argued that as a result of the knowledge gaps, mentioned above, there is no support for the conclusion that unemployment is related to either violent or property crime (Tropp, no date).

In fact, the linkage between employment status and crime has not been well specified; the differential effects of wide variations in type of employment and type of crime are not developed or explored in any systematic manner. Theorizing has been myopically focused on traditional crime, and within this category, largely on property offenses, so the question of the relationship between employment status and nontraditional crime, such as white-collar and occupational offenses, or violent crime has been largely ignored. Furthermore, middle-class and employed people commit traditional, as well as nontraditional, crimes. Thus, there may be differences in the impact of unemployment depending on social class.[4]

Even among lower class individuals it is likely that while unemployment may play a central role in decisions to participate in illegal activity, being employed will not necessarily stop criminal behavior. Regarding recently released prison inmates, Soothill (1974:293) writes:

> Clearly employment on release is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for no subsequent criminality to occur. In other words, if there is employment on release, this certainly does not mean that there will be no subsequent reconviction--the high proportion of men who are employed at the time of committing their offence empirically answers that suggestion; similarly, if there is no criminality after release, one cannot reasonably suggest that these men would inevitably be in employment after release.

Obviously, there are many other factors in the causal linkage between employment status and criminal behavior that must be explored before any explanation is complete.

Despite these qualifying arguments, evidence from interviews and surveys of ex-offenders suggests some linkage between employment status and decisions to engage in criminal activities. Studies which have asked parolees and other recently released prisoners what they perceive to be their needs and major problems upon release from prison reveal a marked uniformity; employment, per se, or a more general focus on finances and work, emerge as the dominant concerns of ex-offenders (see Erickson et al., 1973:66-68; Soothill, 1974; Waller, 1974:174). "In fact, over one-half of their comments centered around jobs, money, credits, debts, etc." (Erickson, et al., 1973:66).

Theoretical Linkages Between Employment and Crime

Given the amount of research conducted in this area and the number of policy studies that base their suggestions on this purported relationship between unemployment and crime, the lack of a theoretical basis for much of the research and policy is surprising. Much work simply begins by assuming such a relationship and proceeds from this point, without exploring why such a relationship should exist. However, there are orienting frameworks in both sociology and economics that provide theoretical bases for a relationship between employment status and criminal activity.

Within sociology, one explanation of the causes of crime and recidivism, based on the structural theories of Durkheim and Merton, combines the concepts of anomie and differential opportunity. This theory claims that illegal behavior results from the disparity between the goals established and valued by society (primarily material or financial) and the means available to achieve these goals. When legitimate means are not within the reach of an individual, and there is an inability to lower the level of aspirations, an individual may resort to illegitimate means (e.g., criminal behavior). As Cloward and Ohlin (1960:150) state: "Given limited access to success-goals by legitimate means, the nature of the delinquent response that may result will vary according to various illegitimate means."

The relevance of the Cloward-Ohlin thesis for parolees is straightforward. Upon release from prison, the offender is likely to face major limitations--real and perceived--on his/her opportunities for

self-fulfillment, both through employment and through personal relationships. These limitations may push in the direction of further criminal activities.

> The concept of differential opportunity and the incongruity between means available to the parolee and the goals he desires may have contributed to his crimes preceding incarceration. These same factors usually continue to exist upon his release. His behavior patterns may or may not include committing further crimes, but clearly a future determinant of his behavior is how he sees his present situation in relation to his conception of an ideal life or what he expects of himself (Erickson, et al., 1973:75).

If employment is obtained, however, the offender's perceptions of his/her access to desirable goals may be positively altered, along with an actual increase in available "square-world membership opportunities" (Dembo, 1971:350). Aside from the immediate and long-term financial gains from legitimate employment, then, success in the labor market could serve as evidence that success in a law-abiding defined way is possible in other aspects of the ex-offender's life.

A second perspective relevant to a discussion of employment and crime combines a labeling perspective (Becker, 1963) with self-concept theories, such as that developed by Reckless and Dinitz (1967). Self-concept theories of deviance, which view one's self-concept as a key factor in explaining choices among alternative behaviors, are based on the assumption that as society becomes more impersonal, the self takes on a larger role as a controlling agent of behavior. If an individual has had several contacts with agents of social control who have applied the label "criminal" or "delinquent" and have interacted with the individual on this basis, and if peers and family reinforce this role, it is likely that the individual's self-image will align itself with this public image, contributing ultimately to a continuation of deviant or criminal behavior (Becker, 1963:

31-34). For ex-offenders the prison experience provides an even more powerful reinforcement for criminal identification, since it may encourage development of "a self-protective posture which rejects those who reject him" (Sullivan, 1971:5).

Although among the noncriminal population an individual may have many roles and statuses, one's occupation often takes on the role of "master status" (Becker, 1963), that is, a central status under which other roles become subsumed. A change in this status can have substantial impact on one's self-concept, as Cohn's (1978) research suggests; he finds "basic evidence that employment status does affect self-satisfaction... Those who become unemployed are significantly more dissatisfied with themselves than are the stably employed" (84). Dale's claim that "A person's identity--both in his own eyes and in the eyes of others--is very often tied to his occupation" (1976:322) is supported by these findings. For ex-offenders, the role of criminal often constitutes their occupation, and, therefore, their "master status," increasing the probability of their returning to crime. In discussing the decision to commit crime, Glaser (1964:490) notes the importance of the ex-offender's self-concept when he argues that individuals, if faced with a choice between a criminal or noncriminal act, will decide according to which behavior provides them with the most favorable self-conception. "This conception is determined by prior experiences and present circumstances." Therefore, if the ex-offender continues to interact with others who reward the criminal role and self-concept, recidivism is likely. However, if the ex-offender can obtain a job, associations with supervisors and

co-workers may come to replace old relationships. As a larger proportion of the individual's time is filled with such interactions, and reinforcements of a criminal identity are reduced, the ex-offender's self-concept may also change to accommodate the new status. The linkage between labeling and self-concept theories, then, can work in two directions, either to encourage deviant or nondeviant behavior. The major intervening variable in this process for many ex-offenders is likely to be their employment status.

Sutherland's (1947) theory of differential association provides a starting point for a third theoretical perspective which contributes insight into the relationship between employment status and criminal activity. Sutherland's theory explains law violation as resulting from an "excess of definitions favorable to violation of law"; such definitions are acquired through interactions with others, and therefore criminal behavior, like all behavior, is learned by association. While differential association as a general explanation of crime has been widely criticized, the influence of group relations on the relationship between unemployment and crime is recognized both theoretically and in intervention programs (e.g., Glaser, 1964; Erickson et al., 1973; Soothill, 1974; Vera Institute of Justice, 1977). While there are three periods during which these associations are influential--interactions prior to committing a crime, interactions during incarceration, and post-release interactions--the third period is of most concern to this argument. Erickson's interviews with ex-offenders indicate that parolees are most dependent on others in this immediate post-release period:

> The greater frequency of contact with friends and neighbors reported by the parolees as compared with the general population can be seen as reaching out for primary support to overcome their relative lack of internal or familial resources. If the friends and neighbors are oriented to the criminal subculture, then the result of deficient primary support from relatives can lead to increased probabilities of recidivism (1973:82).

However, if employment is obtained, then to the extent that the offender's group relationships are modified and interactions with others who are not oriented toward a criminal lifestyle increase, there should be a decreased probability of recidivism.

A final sociological explanation of deviant behavior, which can be tied in with the perspective of group relations, is Matza's (1964) idea of "drift"; that is, the individual is viewed as drifting in and out of criminal behavior, postponing any definite commitment to it as a way of life. While Matza's theory was originally formulated in respect to juvenile delinquency, it also applies to adult offenders, as is evidenced by Dembo's (1971) discussion of the "'what have I got to lose' attitude often expressed by parolees. . .The parolee gravitates to the deviant norm-supporting groups in the community more often as a result of his inability to come up with something better than their support of the values he knew while an inmate." For those ex-offenders who have not developed a strong criminal identity, the drift theory would view employment as one means to push the individual in the direction of a commitment to conventional behavior, while unemployment would encourage a continuation of delinquency and drift.

Economic theories of criminal behavior are based on a rational model of human behavior. The general argument states that individuals faced with a fixed amount of time choose to allocate their time to

certain activities depending on the rewards and costs, both psychological and material, involved in the activities. The concept of "opportunity cost" broadens the measurement of the direct costs involved in engaging in an activity to include those costs resulting from the forfeiture of alternative activities. Participation in illegal activities is therefore viewed as a result of the subjective evaluation of its costs and rewards balanced against the costs or rewards associated with alternative legitimate activities. To the extent that opportunities for legitimate activity are quantitatively and qualitatively limited, and the perceived risks associated with illegitimate activity are low, the probability of engaging in criminal behavior is increased. This is the basic theory that has guided much of the economic research on crime and delinquency (e.g., Fleisher, 1966; Ehrlich, 1973; Sjoquist, 1973; Danziger and Wheeler, 1975).

Danziger and Wheeler (1975) have suggested two variations on this perspective that should be noted. First, they expand the notion of the "rational" criminal to include components such as taste for risk, peer group influence, age, education, etc., in order to include some measure of "allegiance to the social contract." They thus provide a partial explanation for variation among apparently similarly situated individuals in their choices of behavior. They also note, along with Witte (1976:33), that in calculating rewards and costs of different behaviors, individuals tend to be concerned with their relative, rather than absolute, economic position, comparing themselves both to their own reference group and the wider society.

How do these arguments relate, then, to a discussion of the relationship between unemployment and crime? Individuals without jobs presumably would perceive prospects for earnings from legitimate activities to be quite low. Thus they would regard the opportunity costs of time spent in criminal activity as low; on the other hand, they would be likely to regard the payoff from crime as relatively high. Ehrlich (1973:529) elaborates on this in his discussion of recidivism:

> ...an offender is likely to repeat his illegitimate activity if the opportunities available to him remain unchanged. Indeed, legitimate earnings of convicted offenders may become much more scarce relative to their illegitimate opportunities because of the criminal record effect and the effect of long imprisonment terms on legitimate skills and employment opportunities. Recidivism is thus not necessarily the result of an offender's myopic, erratic behavior or lack of self-control, but may rather be the result of choice dictated by opportunities.

This, coupled with skills obtained in prison that may be perceived as reducing the probability of rearrest, may lead to a "rational" decision to recidivate.

According to the economic model of crime, if legitimate earnings opportunities were available and the psychological and financial rewards from these were increased, the costs of deviance would increase (because both direct and opportunity costs would be raised) and the rewards of deviance would decrease as alternative forms of behavior became more viable and less risky means of achieving certain ends. While much attention has been focused on raising the costs of crime by increasing the severity of penalties, it is apparent from this argument that increasing the attractiveness of legal opportunities by providing job opportunities and higher wages could also reduce crime.

While the various theoretical perspectives discussed above acknowledge a relationship between employment and crime, they differ in their view of how the specific nature or character of the job will influence criminal behavior. Anomie and opportunity theory, for example, predict that only jobs that are perceived as creating or increasing opportunities for future employment, through providing better skills, training, and/or credentials, would decrease the probability of criminal involvement. The immediate rewards of a low-skill, dead-end job would have little impact on a person's illegal behavior, except perhaps to increase it, according to this theory. In contrast, economic theory, at least as it has been applied to crime reduction, is less oriented toward future rewards.[5] It emphasizes the importance of the immediate financial returns from work in decreasing the need to commit crime. Most intervention programs that are based on economic principles rely heavily on the purported link between increasing wages from current legitimate work and decreasing wages from illegitimate activities.

Sociological and economic theories also have differential relevance to the type of crime that will be influenced by changes in employment status or unemployment. Sociological perspectives, especially those which draw from differential association, drift, self-concept, and labeling theories, offer explanations which apply to all types of deviant and criminal behavior. Motivations for both personal and property crime could be reduced by improving a person's employment situation, according to these theories. The traditional economic approach tends to be more limited in its impact, as Witte (1976:31) notes: "[The] economic model of crime should be most applicable to income-generating crimes, property crimes, which are precisely the crimes that have increased most rapidly in recent years."

Recently, economists have begun to expand their theories to include motivations for personal crimes, as well. Ehrlich (1973) views personal crimes as motivated by nonmarket needs, while arguing that they are still "time-intensive consumption activities" (533). His reasoning implies that both the poor and the affluent receive certain personal rewards from violent behavior, but that the more affluent or steadily employed individual would have less time available for such behavior and would evaluate the opportunity costs as greater than would an unemployed or poor person. Arguing that personal crimes "are produced by the same underlying conditions that produce crimes against property," Danziger and Wheeler (1975) disagree with Ehrlich's viewpoint, and offer an explanation that sees violent crimes "as responses to the frustrations of malevolent interdependence. . .transmitted through relative welfare comparisons in the same manner as property crimes" (119). In spite of these new suppositions, most intervention programs based on economic theory continue to restrict their attentions to property crimes and convicted property offenders.

Employment Opportunity Programs for Offenders: A Review of Their Consequences

Having established a theoretical framework for viewing the relationship between employment status and deviant behavior, we can now turn to a review of intervention programs that have attempted to produce changes in individuals' behavior and lifestyle through changing their employment opportunities. These programs can be divided into two categories: those intended for a variety of disadvantaged target groups and those aimed specifically at

ex-offenders. There have been several employment and training programs funded by the Department of Labor aimed at youth, the under- or marginally employed, welfare mothers, etc., including Job Corps, the Work Incentive Program, Public Service Employment, and other CETA-related programs. In general, they have served less disadvantaged populations than those reached by Supported Work. Most have also offered other supportive services such as training, education, and/or counseling. While work experience and employment are the major intervention strategies of these programs, a common pattern is the provision of short-term jobs to those with considerable prior employment experience. Zimmerman's (1978) extensive comparison of employment and training programs aimed at a variety of disadvantaged populations details these differences, strongly suggesting that the modest success rates obtained by some of these programs are of limited relevance to programs dealing with ex-offenders.

Ex-offenders have been the recipients of a variety of intervention programs aimed at reducing their recidivism rates, increasing their opportunities for legitimate employment, and directing their lives into more conventional patterns. Many of these programs take place during incarceration, and include vocational training, remedial education, and work release programs. These efforts are based on the assumption that improving prisoners' skills and education, and providing them with job experiences during incarceration will increase their chances for successful adjustment upon release.[6] However, as Glaser (1964), Evans (1968:212) and Cook (1975) note, the relevance of these programs to post-release experiences is quite limited. While vocational training and

remedial education have been able to measurably increase academic and vocational skills, Cook (1975:47-48) claims these effects have not been shown to significantly change employment experiences, earnings levels, or recidivism rates, leading him to conclude that

> ...the training programs have not actually succeeded in improving the participants' job opportunities. This interpretation entails two possible explanations: (1) even with newly acquired skills, released offenders are unable to find decent jobs; and (2) released offenders with improved skills are able to find better jobs, but they are unable to keep them because the training programs have not prepared them adequately for the social and technical demands of such work.

The rationale for the emphasis on immediate post-release services as contrasted to prison-based services has been developed by several researchers, including Taggart (1972:65), who states that such services "can ease the transition from prison life to community life. Specific problems can be met as they arise and the participant can be kept occupied during the critical period of adjustment." Taggart notes also that community-based services permit closer following of the individual in order to reach him/her before his return to deviant behavior. The period immediately after release is seen as the most critical, both psychologically and financially, and therefore intervention at this point is potentially more influential than any pre-release programs.

One type of post-release intervention plan, based on assumptions of the economic model developed earlier, is direct financial assistance to recently released prisoners. Emphasizing the limited monetary resources of ex-offenders above employment needs per se, the rationale behind such programs defines the immediate financial needs as the major problem of

recently released ex-offenders. The implication for criminal behavior is that recidivism and property crimes will result because of pressures generated by lack of money. This is supported by Fleisher's findings (1963) showing loss of income has greater effects on parole adjustment than loss of employment. Direct financial assistance programs, which provided parolees with either stipends over a period of time or one-time flat grants, were carried out in California, Connecticut, and Washington.[7] Follow-up studies conducted to evaluate the impact of these programs found very limited, but some positive, experimental effects, with a small reduction in recidivism, but few employment differences between experimentals and controls. The conclusion drawn by Taggart (1972:103) is that "the conceptual arguments for income maintenance during post-release adjustment," however compelling, are not supported by the findings of such programs. Feeley (1974:34), after reviewing these programs, also sees little positive impact: "It would be impossible to conclude that additional financial support can be justified solely on the basis of improvements in these studies."

Two programs have combined both direct financial assistance and job placement, based on the idea that meeting immediate needs along with attempting to increase longer-term alternatives will "increase the choice set of released prisoners and thereby the opportunity cost of crime"[8] (Mallar and Thornton, 1978:209). Though similar in concept, LIFE and TARP differed in their target groups (LIFE selected those non-drug offenders with the highest chances of theft recidivism while participants in TARP were randomly selected from the entire population of recently released

prisoners. The programs also differed in substance (e.g., size and length of payments, nature of job-placement services, etc.). A follow-up of LIFE participants found that those receiving just financial aid were more successful both in terms of reduced recidivism and improved employment experiences, when compared with a control group and with a group which received only job-placement services. The post-program evaluation of TARP failed to show even these limited positive results (Mallar and Thornton, 1977 and 1978, and personal communication). These findings obviously contrast with those from the preceding three program studies, but differences in participant selection, geographic area, and labor market conditions may explain much of this variation.

The last group of programs we shall discuss are those which provide either job placement or supported work. The primary purpose of the APEX project, conducted in England, was to examine the effectiveness, as measured by reconviction rates, of finding suitable employment for ex-offenders from two different prisons immediately upon their release. An analysis of the randomly selected experimental and control groups, whose members were followed for at least a year after release, found no significant differences in either reconviction rates or employment experiences (Soothill, 1974). An evaluation of Project Develop, a two year program in New York that provided a variety of supportive services along with job placement to a selective group of young parolees (undereducated, underemployed, above-average intelligence) found some evidence of reduced recidivism and parole violation. However, problems with the biased selection of a control group suggest such results wash out when accurate comparisons are made (Taggart, 1972:67).

Beginning with the perspective that the major barriers that prevent parolees from adjusting to employment are "primarily due to on-the-job behaviors that [are] incompatible with the effective operation of industrial social systems," Operation Pathfinder (1972:1) placed 173 youthful parolees (over 18 years of age) in semiskilled production-type jobs paying up to $4.20 an hour, and then varied the type of supervisory experience of the parolees by randomly assigning them to three different groups. Supervisors were trained in a behavioral technique called "social reinforcement," which calls for positive verbal acknowledgments of any improvements in an employee's job performance and the elimination of negative feedback. Parolees received either only on-the-job social reinforcement from a work supervisor, only off-the-job reinforcement from a counselor, or social reinforcement both on and off the job. Program findings indicate that job performance was improved only when subjects received on-the-job reinforcement. "Compared to the control group, the experimental groups, in general, were characterized by a substantially higher employment rate and longer job tenure" (Cook, 1975:31). While the effect of the job-placement aspect of this experiment was not tested, the results from Operation Pathfinder strongly suggest the importance of attending to the psychological needs of ex-offenders in order to improve job-related behaviors, habits, and attitudes that are often ignored in training programs emphasizing only the acquisition of job skills.

Finally, Project Wildcat, which served as a model for the present Supported Work Program, offered employment to a randomly selected group

of ex-drug addicts, and then followed experimentals and controls for a year. Results indicate that experimentals were employed for a longer period of time, earned more money, recidivated at a lower rate and stabilized their lifestyles more often through the establishment of social relationships and living arrangements. One of the more interesting findings from Wildcat is that employment may not be the major reason for reduction in criminal activity, since many controls with steady employment still had high recidivism rates. "There may, in fact, be aspects of the supported work environment, such as peer pressure and support, which encourage employees to lead a 'straight' life" (Vera Institute of Justice, 1974:88).

Limitations of Work Programs for Ex-Offenders

In summary, despite the positive results of the Wildcat project, an overall review of manpower programs for ex-offenders reveals ineffective results for services such as vocational training, remedial education, counseling, etc. (Taggart, 1972; Cook, 1975). This has been explained as a failure in improving offenders' legitimate opportunities, both real and perceived. Programs aimed at placement and job development have produced modest successes, but mainly through improvement of work experiences, rather than reductions in criminal activity (Taggart, 1972; Cook, 1975). Problems with lack of comparability of data, poor experimental methods (e.g., lack of control groups), selective sampling, short follow-up periods and the wide variety of program services limit conclusions

that can be drawn from these projects. However, the inadequacies and variations in these programs in themselves offer suggestions for potential improvement which may influence program impact.

It has been noted that the major drawback of programs emphasizing training, education, or counseling over an actual job is that these services do not necessarily lead to improved employment opportunities in the post-program period. However, simply providing temporary, low-wage and/or low-skill jobs is probably little better and may in fact have deleterious effects, as several researchers have noted (e.g., Sullivan, 1968; Rovner-Pieczenik, 1973; Cook, 1975). Marginal or dead-end jobs may actually encourage recidivism in two ways, as Sullivan (1971:6) notes, because they may root the individual in "a milieu where they are exposed to excessive criminal behavior and environmental stresses. . .steady employment in a marginal occupation may tend to confirm an offender's view that there is no future in legitimate work and impel him back to crime." Thus, as Evans (1968:211) argues, the quality of the employment provided, as measured by wages, skills, and stability, may be more important than simply holding a job. Unless the employment is seen as increasing the individual's long-term legitimate opportunities, his/her expectations about the future will remain the same, adding to the probability of returning to criminal activities. Therefore, any intervention program must be aimed at providing jobs with advancement possibilities that are linked to regular labor market demands.

An extension of this need for more than simply placing ex-offenders in jobs and then hoping for the best addresses the necessity of teaching work habits, skills, and motivations that are essential for job retention.

Most ex-offenders are inadequately prepared for the social and technical demands of any job; absenteeism and tardiness are common manifestations of their inability to adjust to a work environment. Discussing how business can help the hard-core unemployed in this area, Nadler (1970:117) writes: "What is necessary is not only training that gives the person skills, but company procedures that help support new behavior patterns while he is undergoing training and also later while he is becoming adjusted to his job." Support for appropriate work attitudes and behaviors can be provided not only by supervisors and other program officials, as in Operation Pathfinder, but may be even more successfully inculcated through work peers, especially since peer-group influences have played a major role in most ex-offenders' lives.

Peer-group influence is therefore another important area of attention; in order for the employment experience to decrease the chances of recidivism there must be a "substitution of criminogenic peer group norms and values with peer pressure in the direction of positive attitudes and social skills" (Rovner-Pieczenik, 1973:61). This has been a major disadvantage of programs that place offenders directly in jobs where they have little in common with co-workers who are well integrated into conventional lifestyles. Soothill (1974:294) relates part of the failure of the Apex program to this issue: "Even if there was evidence Apex managed to alter a person's work pattern, this still may not affect the sets of social relationships in which he has been participating." A possible remedy to ensure that ex-offenders see co-workers as peers, so that mutual support and pressure will be effective, is to create work groups composed of ex-offenders. Supervision by program officials would direct such support and pressure toward conventional, rather than deviant, behavior.

Taggart (1972:106) suggests a final strategy related to program implementation that is lacking in many projects and may explain their limited effectiveness. He notes that even the most well-designed programs may fail if inadequate attention is given to rigorous monitoring. Continuous supervision and checking procedures need to be coupled with feedback channels in order to ensure that the program is being carried out as planned. This is also necessary in order to provide for consistency over time within programs.

This summary and critique of other employment programs for ex-offenders can be applied to the Supported Work Program in order to show how the unique features of Supported Work increase the potential for realizing more than those related programs which preceded it. The basic hypothesis behind Supported Work is that, by providing actual jobs with direct links to post-program employment, there will be an increase in immediate economic returns as well as a perceived expansion of long-term opportunities, which will increase participation in Supported Work and decrease the amount of time allocated to other activities.

Key Characteristics of Supported Work

In order to further this general aim Supported Work has several special characteristics that reflect both the policy suggestions discussed above and the theoretical explanations for criminal behavior developed earlier. Recognizing the importance of peer-group support, participants work in the company of other ex-offenders--ensuring perceived similarity--under the assumption that conventional work habits and changes in perception of the value of work can be encouraged through peer pressure.

Through close and supportive supervision, rewards from authority figures aid in altering the ex-offender's self-concept, as well as providing another avenue for learning appropriate skills and habits. Graduated stress through rewards and punishments allows for the initial difficult adjustment period which most ex-offenders pass through, while ensuring that the challenges and requirements of a realistic work atmosphere are eventually experienced by participants. Finally, the provision of a monitoring system aimed at checking on whether these unique program characteristics are being instituted addresses Taggart's concern in this area.

The potential for success of Supported Work, as measured by changes in employability, criminal behavior, drug use, family stability, and other lifestyle variables, is assumed to derive from its contrast to earlier programs that have apparently failed. First, the transition from program to post-program jobs is eased, since the habits and skills acquired through Supported Work are not tied to a specific job, but are general preparation for regular labor market employment. The acquisition of job-search skills, work habits and skills, and work credentials should increase participants' self-confidence, therefore influencing perceived, as well as actual, future opportunities. These characteristics are expected to have the most direct impact on improving ex-offenders' legitimate economic activity, by raising the quality (higher wages, more advancement potential, etc.) and stability of their post-program jobs.

It is hypothesized that the direct impacts on employability will be accompanied by impacts on criminal activity, drug use, and lifestyle variables. Participation in Supported Work should raise the opportunity costs of criminal activity, while steady wages would decrease the need to

resort to crime to provide for immediate living expenses. Added income, by relieving deprivation distress, decreases the need to rely on release through drugs. To the extent that the program is valued, use of drugs that interfere with successful participation will be discouraged. A steady income, combined with increased future income opportunities, should encourage family stability by providing the sort of consistent support necessary for extended personal ties. Perceptions of the ex-offenders by friends and family members should change over program participation, encouraging a self-concept based on noncriminal roles and statuses; this should also aid in establishing a more conventional lifestyle.

In sum, by attempting to provide a more integrated approach to the ex-offenders' problems of adjustment, Supported Work avoids some of the major pitfalls of earlier programs. Because its aims are broader (i.e., recognizing the need for change in several areas, including employment experiences, criminal activity, drug use, family life, etc.), its potential impact is greater.

Despite these improvements over previous manpower programs, the Supported Work Program still suffers from major drawbacks because of its failure to take into consideration many of the factors important to the relationship between employment and crime. The absence of rigorous deduction can be seen in the rather vague assumption that serves as a basis for predicting the effectiveness of the program, i.e., that individuals receiving earnings from legitimate work will not turn to illegitimate activities. The source of many of the problems lies in the lack of specification of the linkage between employment status and criminal behavior;

for, when one elaborates the policy suggestions implied by the various sociological and economic theories, it becomes clear that Supported Work is not fully linked to this theoretical framework.

Despite the warnings noted earlier regarding the importance of the quality of the job in influencing behavior, the Supported Work Program tends to view the rewarding character of program jobs primarily in terms of the wage, as can be seen in the emphasis on the minimum wage rate. This ignores the fact that many of the rewards that would tie a person to the legitimate labor force are psychological rather than financial, as is noted by Rovner-Pieczenik (1973) in her claim that the lower the job level, the less likely that a "fidelity bond" will bridge the gap to stable work. The rewards from legitimate activities are also in competition with those obtained from criminal activities, and, here again, the psychological benefits received play a major role. In interviews with inmates from Riker's Island prison conducted by Vera (1978), it was found that

> For most of our respondents, work tends to be humdrum, low-level and not well respected. In crime, rather than in the legitimate occupational sphere, respondents can more easily envision themselves in grander roles than their daily lives allow. This is true even when the actual criminal roles of the respondent are no less routine than are their work roles. Apparently, at least in imagination there are fewer barriers to upward mobility in crime than in employment (8).

Clearly, then, not all jobs offer the right kind of rewards for an individual with previous criminal activities to give up such behavior for the legitimate work world. Because the job atmosphere is important aside from the actual job duties, how well the techniques of graduated stress and peer support are carried out will, therefore, have great influence on the establishment of ties to the conventional social order.

Supported Work's orientation to an economic model of criminal behavior leads to a second limitation: the lack of relevance to personal crimes. As with most other intervention programs, property crimes become the major focus because there is little attempt to develop hypotheses regarding the relationship between employment and violent crimes. The assumption that violent crimes should be influenced through the same mechanisms and in the same direction as property crimes is questionable, since it is based on a unitary concept of crime.

Almost every follow-up study of previous intervention programs has found that any positive experimental effects decrease rather quickly over time. In Taggart's (1972:67-68) review of these programs, he concludes:

> In assessing the impact of any post-release services, it is also necessary to take a long-run view. While there may be an immediate impact on unemployment and recidivism, the results may fade as participants move out from under supervision. . .Though postponement of recidivism is not an inappropriate goal, it may indicate that the services have had less effect than the supervision and use of parolees time.

While Supported Work has introduced new program techniques (e.g., graduated stress, peer support, etc.) the post-program period has received relatively little attention. If Taggart's conclusion is correct, even these program changes may have little impact over the long run.

A final potential limitation on the effectiveness of Supported Work is suggested by Taggart's (1972:80-82) review of programs that have taken a systems approach to manpower and employment problems of disadvantaged groups. Taggart found that where assistance was provided on a comprehensive basis and where a variety of services were offered, experimentals often fared worse than controls. Soothill, referring to Apex (1974), offers two explanations for this: ". . . this type of approach is likely to be

harmful either because Apex unwittingly perpetuates the stigma of being an ex-prisoner, or, more simply, because Apex erodes still further the opportunity for the prisoner to learn to stand on his own feet" (292). Programs which attempt to provide for a large number of the needs of ex-offenders may, then, foster a dependence that makes successful adjustment extremely difficult. This would explain why some of the direct financial assistance programs discussed earlier were more successful than other, more comprehensive, manpower programs. The former may encourage a sense of independence and instill the belief that participants are capable and trustworthy, whereas the latter may reinforce ex-offenders' feelings of being inadequate and incompetent.

Clearly, the effectiveness of the present Supported Work Program could be greatly limited by any of these factors. Whether or not there are enough changes over past programs, both in theory and practice, to produce positive results in the area of criminal behavior is a question that only the final data analysis will answer. However, the findings from previous programs suggest the presence of many barriers in any attempts to intervene in the relationship between employment status and crime. Taggart's conclusion (1972:97-98), while quite negative, is probably the most realistic one, given past experience:

> There is a demonstrated relationship between employment problems and criminal behavior. Those who fail in the world of work are more likely than others to turn to crime, and if they do, to be caught up by the corrections system. It is therefore logical to assume that if offenders could be placed in more stable, attractive, and rewarding jobs, the propensity to commit new crimes would be reduced. . .Yet there is meager evidence to sustain these beliefs. The dollars spent to date on manpower services for offenders have had little impact on institutions or individuals. Worse still, they have revealed how intractable the problems are, casting doubt as to whether, even with redirection and expansion, manpower services will have more than a very marginal impact. It is a moot point whether increased employability will lead to reduced recidivism. . .

NOTES

[1]A detailed description of the Supported Work Program can be found in Summary of the First Annual Report on the National Supported Work Demonstration (1976), prepared by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation.

[2]Robinson (1950) originally defined this type of aggregative fallacy where the research hypothesis refers to individuals, but data used to test the hypothesis are for groups or aggregates of individuals. Recent examples of this type of study focusing on the unemployment and crime relationship include Glaser and Rice (1959), Guttentag (1968), Johnson (1968), Allison (1972).

[3]Examples of individual-level studies include Glaser, 1964; Evans, 1968; Pownall, 1969; U.S. Bureau of Prisons, 1974; Waller, 1974; Dale, 1976.

[4]Cohn's (1978) research provides some evidence for social-class differences in the personal meaning of unemployment. He finds "that among blue collar workers there is a significant difference in self-satisfaction between the employed and the unemployed, while among white collar workers there is no apparent effect of employment status change on self-satisfaction" (88-89). His explanation of this pattern is that white-collar workers have "alternative components of the self-concept which lessen the importance of the employment status component" (81); that is, white-collar workers have a number of alternative roles and prior achievements that they can fall back upon to bolster their self-concept, whereas blue-collar workers are more likely to depend upon their jobs for their self-concept. This implies any explanation for crime that places employment status

Fn. 4 Cont.

in a central role will be of limited relevance for criminality among offenders who are not members of the lower class.

[5]It should be noted that economic theory as applied to conventional labor market activity explicitly recognizes the investment relevance of current job choices. The seminal work in this field was contributed by Gary Becker, who also has been a pioneer in applying economic theory to crime. See Becker (1964).

[6]The Draper Project is the best example of this sort of program. Belief in the importance of post-release employment for successful adjustment was operationalized in this long-term follow-up comparison of an experimental group, which was provided with vocational training and remedial education in prison, with a control group that received no special attention. A small-scale impact on the post-release criminal behavior and employment experiences of experimentals was found.

[7]Programs that have offered financial aid alone include the California Direct Financial Assistance to Parolees Project, Washington State DFAP, and Connecticut's Parolee Reintegration Project. These are reviewed by California Council on Criminal Justice (1973), and Feeley (1974).

[8]The Baltimore LIFE program served as a model for the TARP (Transitional Aid to Released Prisoners) Program, which was conducted in Georgia and Texas.

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